

Tribal land preservation and support H.R. 548 so that it may be brought to President Biden's desk in a timely manner.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

I would just like to compliment the sponsor's explanation of the benefits that this bill will bring. We have heard a little bit of the great history that lies within Tennessee and of the resilience of the Eastern Band of Cherokee as they have maintained their identity to the land and that their use of the land will further assist the members of this wonderful country of ours to learn a bit more about that history, to learn a bit more about the life that is breathed into the statues that we surround ourselves with here in the people's House.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Again, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for introducing this bill, and I appreciate his tireless work on it. I thank the gentlewoman from New Mexico and the minority support on this piece of bipartisan legislation.

I will say that H.R. 548 is a common-sense bill that facilitates greater control for the Eastern Band of Cherokee over their sacred and historic homelands in Tennessee. It ensures the protection of their timeless heritage, culture, and tradition, and gives them the opportunity to memorialize the history and culture of the Cherokee people.

The Tribe has worked with the Tennessee Valley Authority for more than three decades, and this legislation is long overdue.

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. FLEISCHMANN for his leadership and fulfilling a vital constituent service. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support to H.R. 548 the Eastern Band of Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Act.

H.R. 548 aims to take certain Federal lands in Tennessee into trust for the benefit of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

These lands are intended to be utilized for memorialization, the interpretation of Cherokee history and culture, as well as a space for meeting for events and performing traditions.

For historically significant locations like the Chota and Tanasi, locations that once served as the Cherokee Nation's Capital, memorials are to be built.

From as early as 1721 to 1730, Tanasi functioned as the Overhill Cherokee's de facto capital.

The Cherokee historically were forced to abandon Tanasi, a historic Overhill settlement in modern-day Monroe County, Tennessee, in the 19th century in due to a rising town whose chief held more power.

Chota similarly an Overhill Cherokee towns site in Monroe County, Tennessee that developed after the loss of Tanasi.

The history of the Cherokee is one that is long and rich with history, yet many persecutions from early the USA infringes on their culture.

They are estimated to have numbered around 22,500 people in 1650 and oversaw an area of the Appalachian Mountains that now is part of Georgia, part of eastern Tennessee, and part of what is now North and South Carolina.

The desire for fertile farmland during the Southeast's rapid expansion of cotton cultivation, the finding of gold on Cherokee territory, and the racial prejudice that many white southerners had against American Indians were all factors in the removal of the Cherokees.

The tribe gave up about 4 million acres of territory between 1783 and 1819 in the hopes that this would put a halt to ongoing displacement efforts.

As authorized by the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which resulted in the creation of the Trail of Tears, the Federal Government negotiated treaties aimed at clearing Indian-occupied land for white settlers.

An estimated 4,000 of the roughly 16,000 Cherokee who were forcibly removed between 1836 and 1839 passed away during this process.

The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians was the name given to the Cherokee by the U.S. Government in 1868 after many decades of struggle.

The relationship between the USA and the American Indian tribes is far from perfect.

As such, offering the Cherokee this land to help rebuild the culture that the United States actively displaced is a worthy cause.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 548.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PALA BAND OF MISSION INDIANS LAND TRANSFER ACT OF 2023

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 423) to take certain land located in San Diego County, California, into trust for the benefit of the Pala Band of Mission Indians, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 423

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Pala Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. TRANSFER OF LAND IN TRUST FOR THE PALA BAND OF MISSION INDIANS.

(a) TRANSFER AND ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) TRANSFER OF LANDS INTO TRUST.—If, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Tribe transfers title to the land referred to in subsection (b) to the United States, the Secretary, not later than 180 days after such transfer, shall take

that land into trust for the benefit of the Tribe.

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—The land transferred under paragraph (1) shall be part of the Pala Indian Reservation and administered in accordance with the laws and regulations generally applicable to land held in trust by the United States for an Indian Tribe.

(b) LAND DESCRIPTION.—The land referred to in subsection (a)(1) is the approximately 721.12 acres of land located in San Diego County, California, generally depicted as "Gregory Canyon Property Boundary" on the map titled "Pala Gregory Canyon Property Boundary and Parcels".

(c) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act shall—

(1) enlarge, impair, or otherwise affect any right or claim of the Tribe to any land or interest in land that is in existence before the date of the enactment of this Act;

(2) affect any water right of the Tribe in existence before the date of the enactment of this Act; or

(3) terminate or limit any access in any way to any right-of-way or right-of-use issued, granted, or permitted before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) RESTRICTED USE OF TRANSFERRED LANDS.—The Tribe may not conduct, on the land taken into trust for the Tribe pursuant to this Act, gaming activities—

(1) as a matter of claimed inherent authority; or

(2) under any Federal law, including the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.) and regulations promulgated by the Secretary or the National Indian Gaming Commission under that Act.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) TRIBE.—The term "Tribe" means the Pala Band of Mission Indians.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 423, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 423, the Pala Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Act, introduced by my good friend from California, Congressman ISSA, places approximately 721 acres of land the Pala Band of Mission Indians currently owns into trust.

The Pala Band of Mission Indians are in the southern California town of Pala, with the reservation totaling approximately 12,000 acres. While the Tribal economy is largely supported by agricultural enterprises, the Tribe also operates a 86,000-square-foot Class III casino and resort.

In the early 1990s, San Diego County voters approved a plan to establish the

Gregory Canyon landfill project on a 1,700-parcel of land along State Route 76 west of the Pala Band's reservation.

□ 1715

Plans for development of the landfill ceased when the original owner of the property fell into bankruptcy in 2014.

A successor company began exploring other development opportunities and began meeting with the Tribe to sell a portion of the land to the Tribe for cultural preservation as it contains cultural sites and components meaningful to the Pala Band.

In 2016, 721 acres were purchased by the Tribe. Pala Band Chairman Robert Smith testified to Congress that these acres were historically occupied by Native peoples and are the site of an ancestral village, rock art paintings, and ancient artifacts.

H.R. 423 does not affect any current land and water rights, nor does it impact any rights-of-way or rights-of-use that are currently permitted. The bill also prohibits any gaming pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act on these lands.

Madam Speaker, I thank Congressman ISSA for his leadership on this issue. I support the bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor to be on the floor of the people's House once again in support of this bill, as we hope to pass it out of the House. It passed in the 117th Congress, and I have great expectations that it will do so again.

H.R. 423, the Pala Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Act, introduced by Representative ISSA from California, will direct, as noted, the transfer of approximately 721 acres of land into trust for the Pala Band of Mission Indians.

The Pala Band is located in northern San Diego County with 918 enrolled Tribal members. Members of the Pala Band belong to the Cupeno and Luiseno Tribes, who were forced together by Spanish Franciscan missionaries during the 1800s.

The Pala Band recently purchased the property that includes the remaining portion of Gregory Mountain that is not on the existing Pala Band Reservation and other sacred and culturally significant sites in Gregory Canyon.

The land was purchased to protect and preserve Gregory Mountain, Medicine Rock, and other sites considered sacred by Luiseno Tribes.

Taking land into trust is an integral part of the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Tribal governments. By maintaining Tribal lands, Tribal governments can protect and preserve their ancestral homelands or sacred sites considered culturally significant.

This bill takes those 721 acres into trust for the benefit of the Pala Band

to ensure that the sacred sites and cultural history located on those lands will be honored and appropriately safeguarded. As noted, it also stipulates that current land and water rights are not affected by its enactment, nor is there any effect on any rights-of-way or rights-of-use as currently permitted.

Madam Speaker, I would point out that the two bills we are considering on the floor today have significance beyond the acreage that is being transferred. As noted earlier, the United States has moved from an era when it systematically pushed Native Americans off their ancestral lands through treaties that were broken, as we heard about in the bill we considered earlier, into ever-smaller territories of reservation land.

There was an effort to try to destroy Tribal culture and "kill the Indian to save the man." It has taken far too long, but Congress has finally recognized that Tribal nations will not and cannot be vanquished out of existence and that previous policies were pushing our indigenous nations and Tribes into extreme poverty.

The 1934 Indian Reorganization Act recognized that allowing Tribes to reacquire land and place it into trust was key to the future prosperity of Tribes and essential for them to maintain the culturally significant areas that are central to their identity, religion, and beliefs.

It has not been an easy path forward since then, but Congress has repeatedly adopted laws that also recognize and strengthen Tribal self-governance and sovereignty. Today's bills are continuity of this recognition.

Madam Speaker, I take this moment to thank Chairman WESTERMAN for bringing these two bipartisan bills to the House floor for passage in the first few weeks of our legislative business in the people's House.

I often note that the Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs, previously known as the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States, is some of the most bipartisan work in the House. It is extremely important work that we do for millions of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, who rely on Congress to act consistent with the trust responsibility we owe Tribal nations and peoples.

Congress must legislate on issues regarding criminal jurisdiction, health, and education funding, and so much more. Each Member of this body represents Native Americans, and many of us represent one or more of the 574 federally recognized Tribes. In some districts, like mine, they represent a significant portion of the population. In many districts, Tribes are major drivers of the economy.

Approximately 56 million acres of land are held in trust for Tribes and individuals, and they are proud stewards of the natural resources on those lands.

Last week, one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle belittled this

important congressional work by calling it similar to naming post offices. Such a statement does not recognize the importance of our work in Congress on Tribal issues.

In contrast, Chairman WESTERMAN's presentation of these bills today demonstrates his commitment and leadership on Tribal issues. Once again, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN for recognizing how important our work is for Tribal nations and peoples.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill. I thank Representative ISSA for bringing it once again to Congress and the floor of the House, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I spoke on this a year or two ago, and not much has happened except more time has passed since this land was taken from this Tribe.

I represent 21 Tribes in my congressional district. I believe that when I come to the floor, people look and say, well, you are always representing Tribal issues. I represent the issues that became an issue when Ulysses S. Grant recognized what he had done wrong to Tribes. We began the process over 100 years ago of turning around that challenge.

As the ranking member mentioned, in 1934, we passed significant legislation. Much has happened since that time. One of the things that has happened is, here on the House floor, we talk about CBO scoring. I want to touch on that today, which I didn't do a year ago.

CBO says this has a cost. Yes, when we move land into trust, when we move it into Federal ownership, it loses property tax so there is a small cost. This is not a cost objected to by my county or any of the surrounding cities.

The Native American Tribes in my district have more than compensated the community from the revenues they earn, and they have been good stewards. This land failed to even qualify as a landfill over decades.

This is land that, to many, would be considered not usable. It has water challenges that the Tribe will be spending time and money making sure that they prevent the runoff, that they preserve.

They have antiquity on this site. They will be investing in that.

Yes, a few Members, mostly in my own party, last year failed to vote for this because they said: Well, it is an unfunded mandate. It costs a little money.

Yes, it costs money to transfer things into Federal hands because we lose a little bit of revenue, but over 100 years ago—far over that; actually, during the Spanish time—this land was taken from a people, and there was no compensation.

As we put it back, I would ask each of the Members who considered not voting for it a year ago to reconsider, to consider that every piece of every objection, other than that small one, has been taken care of.

The Tribe will be a better steward of the land than it is now. The land will be better preserved and will be used in a way that—certainly, if you can't qualify as a landfill, it is not exactly the land everybody is looking for.

The reality is the Pala Band has taken what they have earned over the years in agriculture and from their gaming concession and are putting it back into their ancestral land.

I have another Tribe that we are working on that is trying to simply get their graveyard back into trust. We will have the same challenge. They will say: But the graveyard might have an economic cost when it goes into Federal land.

Madam Speaker, I expect this bill to pass—it passed in the last Congress—but I would hope that all my colleagues would look very carefully and say not all transfers are the same. None of them are the same as naming a post office, although naming a post office after a fallen hero is not without its own merit.

Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman and ranking member. I hope that my thoughts, in addition to the kind words said by both sides, will convince us to be united this year. This is an important piece of legislation for a people who have done everything we have asked them to do and more.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his tireless advocacy on behalf of his constituents, and particularly the Pala Band in this instance. I know he has worked on this more than just this year.

Madam Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill, and I have no further requests for time. I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative ISSA for that great summary of the importance of this land to the Pala Band, and the fact that we will actually probably see some economic benefit because they know how to be good stewards of the land. They know what they are going to be doing with the land, rather than letting it sit in the condition it does now.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, H.R. 423 is commonsense legislation, just like the previous bill that we looked at. It will enable the Pala Band of Mission Indians to protect their sacred land and ensure the protection of the Tribe's timeless heritage, culture, tradition, and history.

I thank my colleague, Mr. ISSA, for his leadership and for fulfilling a vital constituent service.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 423, the Pala Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Act of 2023, which will take certain land located in San Diego County, California into trust for the benefit of the Pala Band of Mission Indians.

H.R. 423 directs the Department of the Interior to take 721.12 acres of tribal land in San Diego County, California, into the trust in order to preserve and protect the part of the Pala Band's reservation land.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and any other federal statute are both prohibited by H.R. 423 from being used to allow gambling on the land.

The Pala Band, whose reservation it adjoins, currently owns the land in fee simple.

The land is significant because it contains Chokla, a peak that is extremely holy to the Pala Band and many other tribes in Southern California.

Since at least 1903, the Pala Band, which consists of both Cupeo and Luiseo ancestors, has used Chokla as a location for prayer and fasting.

In addition, the land has the remains of an ancestral village, drawings on rocks, relics, and a variety of culturally significant flora and animals.

In an attempt to prevent the construction of a landfill at the base of Chokla in Gregory Canyon, the Pala Band bought the property in 2016.

The Pala Band aims to protect this holy area in its original state after it is placed in trust, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

A tribe's belief systems frequently have a physiological basis in sacred sites.

These stories serve as a link between successive generations and their predecessors, weaving them into the fabric of tribal identity and culture.

The preservation and transmission of the unique identities, traditions, and histories of Native peoples from one generation to the next depends on the protection of Native sacred places and the defense of the right to perform rites and ceremonies at these sites in secrecy and without interference.

It goes beyond just being a matter of culture or religion for sacred locations to be used and protected.

It is a recognized and safeguarded human right under international law.

According to Article 25 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states that, "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their obligations to future generations in this regard."

It is important that we uphold the laws passed in the past to preserve Indigenous peoples' traditions and cultures.

I strongly urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 423, which enables the Pala Band tribes to secure their sacred place in order to preserve their traditions and culture for future generations.

The bill will also restrict any gaming on Pala Band's land by putting in the trust so tribes can peacefully perform and enjoy their rituals at the sacred land.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 423.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1730

ENERGY CYBERSECURITY UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP ACT OF 2023

Mr. LUCAS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 302) to direct the Secretary of Energy to establish a program to provide financial assistance to graduate students and postdoctoral researchers pursuing certain courses of study relating to cybersecurity and energy infrastructure, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 302

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Energy Cybersecurity University Leadership Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. ENERGY CYBERSECURITY UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In coordination with the activities authorized under title VIII of division Z of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260), the Secretary of Energy shall support the development of a next-generation energy-specific cybersecurity workforce by—

(1) providing financial assistance, on a competitive basis, for scholarships, fellowships, and research and development projects at institutions of higher education to support graduate students and postdoctoral researchers pursuing a course of study that integrates cybersecurity competencies within disciplines associated with energy infrastructure needs;

(2) providing graduate students and postdoctoral researchers with research traineeship experiences at National Laboratories and utilities; and

(3) conducting outreach to historically Black colleges and universities, Tribal Colleges or Universities, and minority-serving institutions.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Energy shall submit to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate a report on the implementation of the activities described in subsection (a).

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY.—The term "historically Black college and university" has the meaning given the term "part B institution" in section 322 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061).

(2) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The term "institution of higher education" has the meaning given such term in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

(3) MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION.—The term "minority-serving institution" means